

# Tense & Lax Vowels - Spelling Hints

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## ◆ Tense (long) Vowels can be recognized generally by the following:

Vowel followed by "h"  
*Sohn, Bahn, fahren, Ähre, fühlen*

Doubled spellings: "aa, ee, oo"  
*Staat, Beere, Boot, Saal, Seele, Moos*

Letter combination: "ie"  
*viel, Miete, wie, Biene, Kiel, Spiel*

Definite articles that do not end in "s" such as "der & die"  
*der, die, den, dem, deren, denen*

## ◆ Lax (short) Vowels can generally be recognized by the following:

Diphthongs: Three standard diphthongs are always lax  
(There are five spelling to three sounds: eu/äu = boy; au = how; ei/ai = eye)  
*Haus, Eis, Eule, Zaun, Mai, bräunen*

Doubled spellings of consonants following a vowel  
*bitte, Sonne, Pizza, Vetter, üppig / (ck = kk) pflücken, Ecke / (tz = zz) Katze, Hitze*

Multiple consonants following a vowel  
*fast, Rind, fünf, Klang, Hemd*

## ◆ Reduced Vowels: (ultra short and completely de-emphasized, such as in: about, the, dust)

"e" at the end of a word  
*bitte, danke, Karre, Bote, lese*

"el, en, er" at the end of a word  
*Gabel, Wagen, Messer, Rassel, wetten, rudern, lächeln, erinnert, bastelt*

"be- & ge-" in prefixes  
*Besuch, Genuss, beschreiben, bekommen, gefallen, genesen*

## ◆ Other Considerations (tendencies, not rules):

Open syllables (syllables ending in a vowel) contain mostly tense vowels  
*Regel (Re - gel) Vater (Va - ter) Bruder (Bru - der)*

Verb conjugations generally retain the quality of the vowel in the infinitive  
*gibt (from geben, tense "e"); tust, tut (from tun, tense "u")*

"u" followed by "ch" is more often tense than not  
*Buch, Besuch, Tuch, suchen*

Many vowels followed by "r" are tense  
*Pferd, Erde, werden, wir, dir, er, für, Tür*

Closed syllables (syllables ending in a consonant) nearly always contain lax vowels  
*Muster (Mus - ter), Rilke (Ril - ke), in, ab, an, etc.*

The ending "ie" from a Latin based word is pronounced as "ee-uh"  
*Familie (from familia), Italien, Spanien, Studie, Prämie, etc.*